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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 19, 1991

SEARS OFFERS FORMER STORE AS NEW ARTS CENTER

Sears, Roebuck and Co. today offered to donate its former retail store at 1300 Biscayne Blvd. to Dade County to be used by the Performing Arts Center Trust as the Miami Arts Center. The 62-year-old Miami building has been described as one of the earliest examples of the art deco style in Dade County, predating the art deco buildings on Miami Beach by several years. (See accompanying story.)

"Sears has been a part of the Miami area for more than 60 years and we are pleased to make this offer to its citizens," said James M. Boozer, general manager of Sears South Atlantic Region. "We are excited that this unique building may have an opportunity to play an important role in the growth of Miami's cultural life."

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Today Sears operates 17 stores in the greater three-country Miami metropolitan area. Statewide the company has 50 retail stores, plus specialty stores and distribution and service centers. Throughout the state Sears, Roebuck and Co. and its subsidiaries employ more than 29,000 associates in merchandising, insurance, financial services and real estate.

"In addition to its role as a retailer, Sears has always been an important contributor to the life and values of the community," said Parker Thomson, chairman of the Performing Arts Center Trust. "We feel that it is only fitting that this culturally unique building be offered to the Trust. We thank Sears for their generous offer. This is just another example of the many important contributions Sears has made to the growth of Miami and Dade County."

A Miami Landmark

Opened in 1929, the 162,000-square-foot store served the growing Miami area for more than 50 years before it closed in 1983. The store is located on 3.6 acres of land, bounded by Biscayne Boulevard on the east and N.E. 2nd Avenue on the west, and by N.E. 14th Street on the north and N.E. 13th Street on the south. Sears will retain two nearby parking lots totaling 1.6 acres.

Since the store's closing, many individuals and organizations have expressed hope that the building and its unique architectural style, which is an art form, could be preserved.

SEARS BISCAYNE -- Add 2

As outlined in its proposal to Sears, the non-profit Performing Arts Center Trust plans to renovate the building into a cultural complex containing a theater, fine arts museum and an educational component.

"The complex, along with the Performing Arts Center, will be another step in the revitalization of the this dynamic area of Miami," noted Boozer.

"We are pleased that its new life will mean the creation of additional employment opportunities and ultimately improve land values and the quality of life in the area."